



## Stepping Stones to Sustainable Institutional Change Efforts

George Kuh  
Jillian Kinzie  
William Craft  
Gerald Francis



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## ***Sustainability*** **A Key to Student Success**

***The path to institutional improvement is littered with failed and faltering interventions, often because too little thought is given to where the resources or energy will come from to sustain the efforts beyond a first or second cycle.***



### **Purpose of session**

**Reflect on and demonstrate what principles and actions will increase the odds our initiatives will take root and have the desired effects**



### **1. Get the ideas right**

***Organizations that improve do so because they create and nurture agreement on what is worth achieving, and they set in motion the internal processes by which people progressively learn how to do what they need to do in order to achieve what is worthwhile.***

(Elmore in Fullan, 2001, p. 125)

### **1. Get the ideas right**

#### ***Focus on a real problem***

- **Persistence**
- **Under-engaged students**
- **Fragmented gen ed program**
- **Tired pedagogical practices**
- **Poor first-year experience**
- **Low academic challenge**
- **Connections to real world**
- **Capstone experiences**

### **1. Get the ideas right**

#### ***Emphasize effective educational practices***

- **Academic challenge**
- **Active & collaborative learning**
- **Student-faculty interaction**
- **Enriching educational experiences**
- **Supportive campus environment**
- **Lessons from DEEP**

## 2. Put someone in charge

*When everyone is responsible for something, no one is accountable for it...*

- Get senior leadership on board
- Some individual or group must coordinate and monitor status of initiatives
- Those 'in charge' not solely responsible for bringing about change
- Form high profile 'think force' or similar group

## 3. Align initiatives with:

- Institutional mission, values, and culture



## 3. Align initiatives with:

- Institutional mission, values, and culture
- Student preparation, ability, interests
- Resources and reward systems
- Existing complementary efforts
  - ✓ NSSE & BEAMS
  - ✓ AASCU American Democracy Project
  - ✓ AAC&U "Greater Expectations"
  - ✓ Gen ed reform
  - ✓ Carnegie Campus Clusters/SOTL/CASTL
  - ✓ Service learning/Campus Compact
  - ✓ Internationalization and diversity

## 4. Focus on culture sooner than later

*Ultimately, it's all about the culture...*

- Identify cultural properties that impede success (initiative, student)
- Tighten linkages across functional areas (academic & student affairs)
- Expand the number of cultural practitioners on campus
- Instill an ethic of positive restlessness

## Positive restlessness

- ✓ Self-correcting orientation
- ✓ Continually question, "are we performing as well as we can?"
- ✓ Confident, responsive, but never quite satisfied...
- ✓ "We know who we are and what we aspire to."

## 5. Cultivate grass roots buy-in

- Leaders endorse, but don't dictate
- Structures not (nearly) as important as relationships
- Navigate political minefields
- Move action to unit/program level
- Validate pockets of quality
- The 10% rule

## 6. Stay the course

*The good-to-great-transformations never happened in one fell swoop. There was no single defining action, no grand program, no one killer innovation, no solitary lucky break, no miracle moment. Sustainable transformations follow a predictable pattern of buildup and breakthrough...*

*(Collins, 2001, p. 186)*

## 6. Stay the course

- Emphasize quality
- Focus on “spread”
- If it works, consider requiring it
- Front-load resources
- Sunset ineffective programs and activities
- Beware the implementation dip

## Reflections on Sustainability

- Identify 1-2 obstacles to sustaining productive change at your institution.
- Describe a characteristic of a successful improvement initiative at your institution.

## Lessons From the Field: Project DEEP

To discover, document, and describe what high performing institutions do to achieve their notable level of effectiveness.



## DEEP Lessons on Sustainability

### *Sustaining curriculum reform*

- Ursinus College implemented the Common Intellectual Experience (CIE) to enhance academic challenge, provide a shared learning experience, and help new students move from dependent to independent learning
- Effort sustained by regular faculty development meetings and the Dean’s “salon”, collaboration between academic and student affairs.

## DEEP Lessons on Sustainability

### *Maintaining a focus on undergraduate teaching and learning*

- University of Kansas (KU) renewed its commitment to undergraduate teaching
- Effort sustained by role model Provost (who teaches each year), generous teaching awards, faculty development center activities

## DEEP Lessons on Sustainability

### *Comprehensive First Year Experience*

- To enhance student persistence, Fayetteville State University developed an holistic First Year Initiative (2 semester seminar, advising and academic support) buttressed by a deeply rooted talent development philosophy
- Sustained by Presidential commitment, assessment data indicating that efforts were making a difference

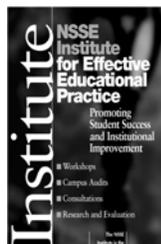
## More Lessons From the Field



**William Craft  
Luther College**



**Gerald Francis  
Elon University**



## Questions & Discussion

DEEP Practice Briefs - Promoting Student Success Series – 16 Papers available:  
[www.iub.edu/~nsse](http://www.iub.edu/~nsse)



- Kuh, G.D. (2005). What campus leaders can do. Occasional Paper No. 1.
- Kuh, G.D. & Kinzie, J. (2005). What the media and the general public need to know. Occasional Paper No. 2.
- Chickering, A.W. & Kuh, G.D. (2005). Creating conditions so every student can learn. Occasional Paper No. 3.
- Kezar, A. J. (2005). The importance of shared leadership and collaboration. Occasional Paper No. 4.